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WUNDT'S SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE influence which Wundt has exerted in this country through his writings and teachings in the department of psychology, is so far-reaching and important that the comparative lack of familiarity with his contributions to logic, ethics, and philosophy seems almost surprising. The explanation is perhaps to be found in the fact that American students who go to Leipzig devote most of their time and attention to experimentation in the Psychological Institute. Too often they take with them, or develop, a scientific spirit so radical in its character that the study of any strictly philosophical discipline is regarded, not merely as needless, but even as positively injurious. The style in which Wundt writes is by no means easy; and this, together with the voluminousness of his works, doubtless tends to reduce the number of readers who devote their time to other than the treatises on psychology, where Wundt's importance as a pioneer in investigation and master in scientific elaboration renders acquaintance with his doctrines indispensable. Yet, even for a clear comprehension of these psychological doctrines, some knowledge of Wundt's philosophical position is essential; and the system which is the final result of broad scientific and philosophical training is in itself worthy of careful study. In a brief article it would be impossible to reflect in any adequate degree the wealth of scientific knowledge and philosophical acumen exhibited in the system of philosophy which Wundt has developed; the aim must rather be to present in broad outlines some of its main tendencies and to point out their relations to the psychological doctrines of this writer.

As might be anticipated from the fact that years of scientific, especially psychological, investigation preceded the completion of Wundt's system, his philosophy gives full recognition to the sciences and to the methods which are employed by them. Philosophy is to seek its foundation in the special sciences, not the special sciences in philosophy. In philosophy the Cartesian principle of doubt has prevailed, while in the sciences the opposite principle has been accepted. "Any fact given in experience is regarded as true, and as possessed of all the attributes that belong to it in perception, so long as no grounds are presented which compel an abandonment of this position." [1] This must also be the principle of philosophy. It is to be noted, however, that a pure empiricism does not follow from its adoption; for pure empiricism grants no knowledge whatever beyond the content of immediate experience, while the principle does allow a supplementation of experience if sufficient grounds are presented to compel it. When experience is thus supplemented, the knowledge which results is secondary and must be recognized as such. The first and most fundamental question which arises, then, is: What knowledge is immediate and unmodified by the processes of supplementation? The discovery of this original *datum* of consciousness is very difficult from the point of view of reflective thought, for here the added and the primary element are so interwoven that it is well-nigh impossible to separate them. If we examine the unreflective consciousness, there will evidently be fewer supplementary elements, and the original *datum* will be more readily discoverable. In such an unreflective consciousness the distinction between idea and object is not yet recognized.[2] There is an undifferentiated content in consciousness which contains potentially all of the elements afterwards distinguished as subjective and objective, but at this stage of development the content of consciousness is absolutely unitary. The application of our principle is evident. Since the content of experience in its unmodified form is always idea and object at once, we must regard the later distinction as secondary and supplementary, while the original *datum* is the original undifferentiated reality. This doctrine of the identity of idea and object is of fundamental importance for Wundt's system. "There is," he says, "no subject and no object whatever outside of our abstracting and analyzing thought. Reality is at once subject and object, thinker and thought."[1] "The whole outer world exists only in our ideas, and, on the other hand, a consciousness without objects is an empty abstraction."[2] The sum total of possible reality is contained in this "idea-object," as Wundt names the original *datum* of thought. Any other reality is secondary and derived. Yet with this doctrine Wundt does not intend to advocate any form of subjective idealism, "for this grants the reality of the thinking subject only, thus making objects the mere thoughts (*Denkhandlungen*) of this subject."[3] The original reality is, in truth, both subject and object.

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[1] *System der Philosophie*, p. 105.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

The essential difference between Wundt's philosophy and idealism is one that holds also for other systems of thought, and lies deeper than the mere attributing of subjective and objective characteristics to the original contents of experience. This essential difference may be defined by saying that Wundt's position is primarily psychological and noetical, while philosophy in the ordinary acceptance of the term is more cosmological and ontological. If we regard immediate experience as real, then being of any kind is secondary. Being can only come into our world of reality indirectly; its nature will be a secondary question. The position usually taken by philosophy has been the direct opposite of this. What is being, and how is knowledge possible as a derived process? is the form in which the question is usually presented. The answer may be a system which is idealistic, materialistic, dualistic, monistic, or agnostic, but in every case it is an attempt to answer the question of the nature of being. Wundt, on the other hand, is dealing with a reality, not of being, but of immediate experience. Being may be a necessary concept for the explanation of this experience, but it remains a concept, and its nature can be known only as it is inferred indirectly through this experience. In this way being is not real in the sense of immediate experience, but is derived and secondary. Or the position taken by Wundt may be defined as subjective. When being is regarded as reality, then experience is a result of the activity of one or more beings, and the thinker transfers himself to a point outside of his experience where he may regard this experience as a product. This transference is possible only in abstracting thought, not in reality. The subjective position is the position from which all reasoning must start. But there is a difficulty which Wundt's philosophy does not seem to dispose of, and that is the question of the relation of this immediate reality of experience to the immediate realities of other experiences. There is a sense in which a theory of knowledge or a system of psychology must be individualistic, but we must allow the possibility of reasoning, by analogy at least, to the processes that go on in other experiences. But with Wundt there can be no reality attached to an experience which is objective to immediate experience. A similar difficulty arises in connection with the question of the relation of the subject to any possible material reality, if idealism is to be escaped. In judging of Wundt's doctrines, however, this difference of the fundamental question treated must not be lost sight of.

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[1] *System*, p. 100.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

The development of thought as a process of differentiation of the original idea-object is the first subject of treatment. There are three stages in the development of knowledge. The first is purely perceptual, and consists in the analysis and relating of the various immediately perceived elements of the original idea-object. There is no addition of any kind to the knowledge which is immediate. The second stage is that of knowledge through the understanding. The contradictions which arise when the various elements of perceptual knowledge are brought into relation, are the motives which lead to the formation of concepts. These concepts are not directly given in perception, but are logical hypotheses, formed for the sake of explaining experience. Finally, as a third stage of knowledge, there is knowledge through reason. This is transcendent and supplementary to all perceptual or conceptual knowledge.

The original idea-object as a strictly undifferentiated unit never presents itself in actual experience, for it is always more or less broken up from the first into its elements. The earliest divisions are into purely perceptual elements, such as into individual idea-objects, into matter and form, into single objects, and finally into the subjective and objective elements. The process of differentiation is due to the independent variations of certain elements of the idea-object and to the greater constancy of certain of these elements. For example, the spatial relations of a group of sensations may be changed without any modification of their qualitative character. As a form of relation, the spatial form is a more constant element of all idea-objects than is the sensational content, so that space and matter come to be distinguished, and since space is the more constant it is regarded as more objective in character, while the greater dependence of the variable sensational elements on the subject is recognized through the greater variableness of these elements. On the other hand, certain affective and volitional elements, which in relation to the content of idea-objects are exceedingly variable, have a certain constant character in relation to each other and are thus isolated from elements of ideas and are recognized as purely subjective, without any objective reference whatever. All of these elements, it will be noted, are merely elements of a unitary idea-object. One element cannot exist alone in reality, but all must be present. Furthermore, it is evident that they are all immediately subjective in character even though some of them have a greater or less objective reference, and that they constitute the sum total of all possible subjective experience or reality. Psychology, which has to do with this subjective experience, is therefore, according to Wundt, a science which has to do with perceptual knowledge only. Its concepts are mere class-concepts which include a larger or smaller group of such immediately perceivable elements, and are in no way essentially different from the elements which compose them. It may be admitted again, as before, that the point from which knowledge can be studied directly must necessarily be the subjective point of view. But unless some sort of knowledge beyond this immediate experience of the individual is admitted, the general validity of the inductions of psychology seems endangered. Psychology as science must provide for knowledge beyond perception just as much as a science of nature.

The greater constancy of spatial and temporal attributes and their consequent reference to the objective world, are the means of connecting perceptual with conceptual knowledge. So long as space and time are distinguished from content merely as forms of perception, it is clearly recognized that form and matter are in reality inseparable. But we may think of these forms and represent them to ourselves together with their contents, and at the same time have the added thought that the contents are indifferent, and that the forms have reality of their own. It is evident that the forms thus thought of are not present in immediate experience. They have only secondary reality. They would never have been suggested except that there arise certain contradictions in our perceptual experiences which require us to make this hypothetical assumption. For example, let *A* and *B* have successively the same spatial relation with respect to *C*. Here is a contradiction; we must eliminate it by assuming that matter (*A* and *B*) is independent of the forms represented by succession and by the relation to *C*. It must be clearly understood what the character of this conceptual knowledge is. Conceptual space is a logical construction due to certain contradictions which arise in experience. It does not find its justification in any transcendent world of things in themselves, nor in the transcendental knowledge of appearances; it is derived indirectly from experience, and has no justification but experience. It is merely a logical device for explaining experience. Conceptual space serves as a good example of concepts in general; the only difference is that conceptual space is more closely related to perceptual space than other concepts are to their perceptual representatives. All concepts must have some perceptual representative, for as concepts they are not directly given in perception. When, for example, we define water as made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen, we are dealing with concepts entirely, but each concept has a perceptual representative. First, we have a certain perception which we have, for the sake of explaining experience, come to regard merely as an idea representing a reality which can never enter into experience, namely, a real substance outside of the idea. This substance we call 'objective' water. This water, or object outside of ourselves, we define as made up of two gases. These gases in turn have no reality except as concepts necessarily formed for the explanation of certain contradictions in experience. And their union in this quantitative proportion is another conceptual hypothesis to which we have been led by experience, but which has no primary reality and is merely a logical hypothesis. All these concepts have perceptual representatives, but when we attend to the perceptual representatives all attributes of independent objective existence disappear. There is merely a series of mental states in which we distinguish certain elements, but these elements are in no sense independent; they are always inseparably connected. There is no equivalent among these perceptual elements of the concepts developed from them; there may be a perceptual representative which was the original *datum* that served as the basis for the logical hypothesis, but this logical hypothesis, or concept, has no immediate reality — it is secondary and indirect. The natural sciences study such concepts in their relations to each other, without reference to their relations to the original representatives in perception. Thus, water is studied in its relation to hydrogen and oxygen; in other words, one concept is studied in relation to two others. The origin of these concepts as conditioned by the contents of immediate experience is neglected, the subjective elements of experience are thus disregarded, and natural science becomes a science of pure conceptual knowledge. The difference between psychology and natural science, on Wundt's theory, is apparent. Natural science deals with conceptual, while psychology has to do with perceptual, knowledge.

The third form of knowledge, knowledge through reason, goes beyond experience, and constructs ideas which are not required for explanation, but are added to satisfy the desire for unity, for a universal system which will include all concepts and general principles. The principle on which thought proceeds in the construction of these ideas is the principle of sufficient reason.

The principle of sufficient reason is a law of thought. It is related to the other laws of thought, namely, the laws of identity and contradiction. All represent the way in which consciousness actually carries out its analysis and relating of concepts. If a concept is analyzed into its parts we may have two kinds of relations. First, there is a relation between any given part and the whole concept; this is a relation of more or less complete identity. Second, there may be a relation between two of the parts; here we have interdependence rather than any kind of identity. That these relations are recognized in thought is expressed by the principles of identity and contradiction on the one hand, and the principle of sufficient reason on the other. The important question arises: What necessity is there that these laws shall operate? for evidently their limits will be defined by defining the kind of necessity which puts them in force. The answer is that they are laws of thought, or laws of immediate experience. They express the laws of subjective, self-conscious, relating activity, that is the thinking activity with which we have to do. And the relating activities of thought are "free acts which are carried out by thought in obedience to inner impulses, without any compulsion from outer perception."[1] The "inner impulses" constitute, then, the source of all necessity of thought. When, accordingly, the law of sufficient reason is given as the justification for the formation of transcendent ideas it is evident that thought has in no way gone beyond itself. It has simply transcended its perceptual knowledge, and may even have gone beyond all the requirements which this perceptual knowledge imposes upon it of giving a conceptual explanation of itself. But it has not yet escaped from the individual, subjective, self-conscious activity, which is thought itself.

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[1] *System*, p. 79.

The way in which the principle of sufficient reason operates in carrying thought beyond the concepts of understanding, will be clear if it is remembered that this law depends upon the relating of the interdependent parts of a concept. All concepts come to be regarded as interdependent parts of more general concepts, until, on the one hand, we reach a universally comprehensive idea, and, on the other hand, its last unitary interdependent parts. In constructing ideas to satisfy these demands of reason, the mind may produce two kinds of transcendent ideas. First, those which are qualitatively like the concepts with which it started; and secondly, those which are qualitatively different. What is meant by this distinction may be made clear by reference to mathematics. The formal character of mathematical concepts makes it possible to establish with great certainty the rules under which they were formed, and under which they are to be treated. For example, the rules applying to concrete space and to conceptual space, as well as to mathematical concepts of plurality, are well-fixed formal rules. They may be extended beyond the realm of all possible experience. Thus we may take the sum of an infinite series, or we may define the attributes of an infinite extension, or we may indicate an endless process as in the expression $\sqrt{2}$. Here, though we have passed beyond the realm of all possible experience, the ideas which have been constructed by reason are qualitatively similar to the concepts of the understanding. This class of transcendent ideas Wundt calls 'real.' The other class of transcendent ideas are called 'imaginary,' and differ in quality from the concepts of the understanding. We can illustrate again by a mathematical example. The process of evolution as applied to ordinary integers is fully defined; its rules are formal and universally applicable. But if we apply them to the value -1 in the process $\sqrt{-1}$, the result is not a number with the ordinary attributes, but is an imaginary quantity with peculiar attributes. The same is true of philosophical transcendence. Suppose, for example, we try to determine what the transcendent ground of the immediately perceived activity of consciousness is. It is clear that it cannot be described by the same attributes as the conscious activity itself, for it cannot be conscious. It is something qualitatively different from this conscious activity.

The kind of validity which belongs to these ideas of reason is not the immediate certainty of perceptual knowledge, nor is it the derived certainty of the concepts of the understanding. It is merely the validity which attaches to the conscious extension of the synthetic activity of reason beyond the limits of all possible experience. The reason seeks here, not to explain experience, but to supplement it. In doing this it is governed only by the law of sufficient reason, a law of its own activity. The absence of all direct reference to reality is emphatically maintained.

The special treatment of the closely related concepts, substance and cause, is of importance, especially in its bearings on the doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism. There is a concept which underlies both of these concepts; it is the thing-concept (*Dingbegriff*). This thing-concept is one of the earliest products of the understanding, and arises from the greater objective reference of the spatial and temporal forms of perception. The qualities of perceptual objects are regarded as mere subjective qualities, while the space and time forms are looked upon as objective. When any group of sensations shows an unbroken continuity of spatial and temporal attributes, whatever changes may take place in its qualitative attributes, the whole group is regarded as an objective thing. This thing is not absolutely permanent, for it always undergoes more or less important changes in the course of experience. On the other hand, it is not without elements of relative permanence. These contradictory characteristics of change and relative permanence are the motives for the development of two more abstract concepts, namely, substance and cause. Substance is the concept which arises from the attribute permanence. Absolute unchanging being is conceived as the underlying substratum of the thing. Since the basis of this concept in the thing-concept is the continuity of spatial and temporal relations, the same relations will play an important part in the concept substance. Furthermore, since substance is unchangeable its amount will always remain constant. On the other hand, the changes which are observed in things give rise to a correlate concept, the concept of causal activity. Cause and substance thus represent elements of experience which cannot be isolated. They do not exist apart in reality, but are distinctions of a conceptual character which we create in our treatment of this reality. Since, however, the changes in things are the original motives for the formation of the concept of cause, and these changes are not continually taking place, the first stage of the development will attribute greater importance to the underlying substance. It is regarded as the source of the activity which we see as change. Every sort of activity must have its own special source; there must be as many kinds of substances as there are kinds of changes in things. The concept 'force,' which is the product of this stage of development, is the peculiar attribute of the permanent substratum of things which gives rise to the changes in them. This force is a fundamental attribute of substance, and is not derived from any outside source, but is as original as the constant being behind the thing. This stage of development in the natural sciences has its complete parallel in psychology. The psychological concepts are not derived from any psychological thing, for it is evident that there is no justification for a thing-concept in the mental world. All knowledge of this world is immediate and perceptual, and would not of itself give rise to concepts. The psychological concepts are rather framed after the analogy of the concepts of the natural sciences. A substance or underlying permanent somewhat is assumed as the source of mental life, and the various kinds of mental phenomena are regarded as changes due to the different mental forces; but since the substance assumed is unitary, and the various forces cannot therefore each arise from a separate substantial source, they are all attributed to the single substance, and regarded, not as separate forces, but as different faculties of one and the same substance.

The next stage of development was reached when force was regarded, not as the attribute of the substance which gave rise to change, but as the actual influence exerted by one body on another. The actual influence thus exercised and the changes brought about are equal quantities, and force is no longer a hidden something, but is the actual change. The concept 'mass' now appears to express the correlate of this change, or the thing on which the change is exercised. Force and mass are coördinate concepts, definable in terms of each other, and in these terms only. The kind of changes that can be produced are changes in the two essential relations which are taken from the thing-concept, as we saw above, to give us the basis for the substance-concept, namely, the spatial and temporal relations. Such changes are changes in motion. Changes in motion, then, are what we mean by the exertion of force, and force exists only when these changes of motion are produced. By 'produced,' of course, we do not mean actually brought to pass as apparent phenomena, for one change in motion may be counteracted by another in such a way that no real phenomenon occurs. The part that matter or substance plays in this manifestation of force is no longer that of a source of the force, for force is the motion itself. Matter becomes merely a starting-point and terminus for the operation of force. It is a necessary postulate, a condition for the operation of force, but not a source of the same. The source of the force is now to be sought in the antecedent forces which acted upon a given point of matter as the immediate causes of the given movement or of the given force. In other words, one force is caused by others. The whole series of changes in motion are thus arranged under the principle of sufficient reason into an ordered system of antecedents and consequents. Any given force is antecedent or consequent only in relation to the others which it conditions or is conditioned by. The whole series is, however, inseparably bound to certain fixed spatial relations, and the points of space thus postulated as constants are what we have left of the original permanent substratum of all change. Natural causation is thus necessarily connected with substance.

Some further considerations arise. First, energy cannot be substituted as a concept for both force and matter. Energy is simply the product of force, and is measured by the observed process just as much as is the force, which may be described as the process of change rather than its product. "Energy must, just as well as force, have a position in objective space, and under certain particular conditions the points from which energy proceeds may, just as well as the points from which force proceeds, change their place in space, so that the concept of matter as a substratum contained in space is retained in both cases."[1] The causal concept, as here defined, has taken up much of what was originally attributed to the substance. One important consequence of this relation to substance is that the principle of the constancy of substance, which led to the assumption of a constant quantity of substance, now leads to the principle of the constancy of the quantity of energy. The terms of the causal series which are put into the relation of antecedent and consequent are equivalent in quantity. Another consequence of the necessary connection of cause and substance is important in the discussion of the relation of psychical to natural phenomena. When matter becomes reduced to the constancy of spatial relations, evidently there is no longer room for the application of this concept to psychical processes. Substance is a concept which must in all its forms be excluded from the psychical world. Consciousness is always made up of a series of shifting processes. The only permanence here is that which arises from the interconnection of these processes, and 'cause' in this sphere is simply the arrangement of the members of this interconnected series under the categories 'antecedent' and 'consequent.' While natural science deals with a conceptually conditioned system, consciousness is made up of an actually perceived system. It has been shown that the reality of the conceptually conceived system is not distinct from the reality of that immediately perceived. It follows, therefore, that the conceptual series cannot be explained at any point by the actual, nor can the actual series be explained by the conceptual. Thus the causal relations which subsist between natural phenomena, and those which subsist between psychical phenomena, belong to circles which do not intersect at any point. There are, however, certain facts of experience related to both spheres. Thus, for example, the perceptions which we refer to outer objects are, on the one hand, subjective processes, and, on the other, the perceptual basis for empirical thing-concepts. While the subjective processes belong exclusively to the psychical series, the things belong to the conceptual, objective series. The two series are not the same at this point, but they are parallel. This is the noetical basis for the doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism.

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[1] *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 311.

The fundamental difference between the two kinds of causation finds expression in another fact. While the members of a physical series are equivalent, the members of a psychical series are not. Instead of a constancy of psychical energy, the real principle here is one of increase in energy. The derivation of the principle of the constancy of physical energy from the constancy of substance, and the absence of any substance in the psychical series, are the underlying conditions for the difference expressed in these two principles of the quantity of energy.

Psycho-physical parallelism, as taught by Wundt, is, as that writer has again and again pointed out, not to be put on the same basis with the metaphysical parallelism of Spinoza. This parallelism is empirical in that it is based upon the reality of immediate experience, and upon that reality only. It is merely a conceptual relation, laying no claim to explanation of being.

As contrasted with cause, final cause presupposes a consciousness in which the idea of the change which appears, precedes the movement which brings about the change. The movement itself now becomes the means. Thus the same process may be regarded as causal or purposive, according as the consciousness is presupposed or not. The two principles of cause and final cause are therefore not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually supplementary. Final cause may serve as a theoretical or as a practical principle for the explanation of phenomena. When we use it as a theoretical principle we demand the conformity of causal relations to an idea which we assume as appropriate, but whose real existence before the causal process we have no right to assume. Thus, when we say nature always acts along the lines of least resistance, we are attempting an explanation on the principle of final cause, but the principle here has merely theoretical value. Practical value belongs to the principle in the sphere of mental science. Here the products of art or the events of history are all to be explained on the principle of final cause. Wundt makes use of the principle of final cause to explain biological evolution, not theoretically, but practically. The will and purpose in the simple organisms have brought about the changes which have resulted in the development of organisms. We have every reason for regarding the protozoön as a being with volition; and volition presupposes an idea, however primitive in nature, as its motive. Though many processes in organic life have now lost their volitional character, they were originally simple teleological processes. On the other hand, where we have no justification for assuming consciousness or volition, the progress of science requires that we hold to the causal view of things. The higher view which we get in regarding all phenomena under the principle of final cause postulates an intelligence which contains in itself an idea of all the later developments in nature.

The transcendent ideas may be referred to briefly. The ultimate reality of the individual being is found to be will. To be sure, this will must in reality always be applied to some content, but the essential of the psychical individual's reality is will. In attempting to supply some idea of the reality back of our scientific concepts, we are again shut up to this one idea of will. For we recognize them as active, since we are passive in relation to them; and will is the only form of activity of which we have any idea.[1] Ideas result from the interaction of these ultimate volitional activities. The psychical individual is not an elementary volitional unit, but is a unit of higher order made up of the union of many elementary wills. These units of higher order unite in turn to form still higher volitional units, as in the collective will of a mental community. The world is thus made up of units of higher and higher degree, reaching finally a single mental development. Thus universal development reaches out into the moral and religious ideals, and thus leads to the concept of God. But in all this treatment of transcendent ideas we must bear in mind that we are dealing only with ideas. Philosophical investigation has shown the necessity of these ideas as the last analysis of immediate experience. "More than this, it is not able, and is not called upon, to perform. Especially must it refrain from attempting to go beyond the proof of the necessity of the idea to a necessity of some reality corresponding to this idea. Philosophy can prove the necessity of faith, but it can never convert this faith into knowledge."[1]

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[1] *System*, p. 415.

The influences which have had a part in this system of philosophy come from both science and philosophy. On the one hand, we see the effects of the teachings of Leibniz, Herbart, and Kant. The two latter Wundt mentions in one of his prefaces[2] as potent in their influence on his thought, while his frequent references to Leibniz, especially in his *Logik*, show his thorough acquaintance with that thinker. The empirical character of the system it too striking to require special mention. The best short phrase for the description of the system is that which Wundt is making use of in recent articles,[3] "critical realism."

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[1] *System*, p. 444.

[2] *Grundzüge* (4th ed.), vii.

[3] *Phil. Studien*, xii, 3, xiii, 1.